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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MUSCAT 000033

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STATE FOR AC/CB (JHANLINE), L/PM (MCOFFEY)  
STATE ALSO NEA/ARPI (TROBERTS, PWORMAN)  
THE HAGUE FOR CWC DEL, ALSO FOR AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/05/2015  
TAGS: [PARM](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [MU](#)  
SUBJECT: OMAN MFA ON CWC HOST COUNTRY AGREEMENT DRAFT

REF: A. 04 STATE 231152  
[B](#). 04 MUSCAT 2031

Classified By: A/DCM Michael Snowden.  
Reason: 1.4 (b, d).

[1](#). (U) This is an action request for AC/CB. See para 8.

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Summary  
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[2](#). (C/NF) Oman responded to the U.S. draft CWC Host Country Agreement (HCA) with a number of proposed amendments. The Foreign Ministry asks that the HCA be converted to letter format, that it delete the term "challenge inspections", and that it contain a clause wherein the USG pledges not to stockpile in Oman nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. The MFA likewise requests information on any Middle East or other states with whom the USG has concluded an HCA. The Ministry requests a revised text reflecting its proposed amendments before entering into direct negotiations. End summary.

[3](#). (C/NF) A/DCM met January 5 with Ambassador Talib Miran al-Raisi, Chief of the MFA's International Organizations and Conferences Department, to discuss the revised draft CWC Host Country Agreement (reftels). Talib Miran, who had been the primary interlocutor on the HCA issue back in 1999 before it went dormant, informed that he had met with Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi to review the U.S. text. With his disarmament issues desk officer Abdullah al-Amri taking notes, the Ambassador proceeded to outline three changes the Minister requested, and raised an additional question.

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Requested Amendments  
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[4](#). (C/NF) On format, Talib Miran said that the Minister prefers that the agreement be executed as an exchange of letters rather than MOU. He pointed out that Bin Alawi had made the same request in the successful Article 98 negotiations with the USG in 2004.

[5](#). (C/NF) Regarding terminology, he said YBA objected to use of the term "challenge inspection" in the HCA. A/DCM pointed out that the term comes directly from the text of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and that it in fact constitutes a fundamental principle of the verification regime. Talib Miran understood perfectly the provenance of the term and had explained its relevance to the Minister, but said Bin Alawi nevertheless finds the term offensive. Talib Miran asked if it might be possible to use the term "verification inspection," for instance, or even simply "inspection."  
(Note: The Minister had a similar arbitrary objection to a key phrase in the Article 98 negotiations that required exceptional efforts to overcome. End note.)

[6](#). (C/NF) The third amendment sought by the Minister is addition of a clause in which the United States pledges never to "stockpile chemical, biological or nuclear weapons in Oman" (Talib Miran's terminology). The Ambassador said Bin Alawi's reasoning behind the statement is that U.S. military assets are far less likely to be subject to a challenge inspection if there were nothing in the country that might attract unwanted attention.

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Direct Negotiations, Extra Information  
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[7](#). (C/NF) A/DCM inquired whether and when the Omanis would be willing to engage in direct negotiations with USG counterparts on the text (ref A, para 9B). The Ambassador replied that MFA's preference is to receive a new text containing as much of the revisions requested above as possible. Once provided, he would share it with the Minister and seek to obtain permission to enter into direct

negotiation (were further negotiations deemed necessary). Along with a revised draft, Talib Miran said it would be helpful to provide Oman with information on which other states have signed HCA's. A/DCM pointed out that confidentiality provisions were a key element in our HCA's,

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as evident in the draft text provided. The Ambassador replied that any information would be better than none, even if it were simply a count of the existing agreements and indication of their geographical distribution. Obviously, he said, the Minister would feel better knowing that other states in the Middle East have concluded HCA's with the U.S. before Oman.

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Consulting with the Military  
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18. (C/NF) A/DCM inquired whether Ministry of Defense (MOD) officials had participated in the 1998-99 deliberations on the HCA and whether they would participate in any future negotiations. Talib Miran replied that the MFA is the responsible authority for the CWC and, as a result, the MOD had not shown interest in participating. He cited MOD's ambivalence as being a contributing factor for why the HCA negotiations slipped to the back burner in 1999. A/DCM pointed out that any challenge inspection on Omani territory would almost certainly involve MOD facilities, making its involvement in the HCA process a key element. Talib Miran replied that he would encourage MOD involvement and, at minimum, share all relevant information with it. (Note: Implementation of any HCA would be problematic without the full cooperation of the Ministry of Defense. End note.)

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Action Request  
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19. (C/NF) The Embassy would appreciate the Department's response to the Omani suggestions and question raised above.

BALTIMORE